

CENTRAL FLORIDA

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The Voice of Agriculture for Our Region

Horticulture, Floriculture & Land Management Edition

2018 LANDSCAPING TRENDS: HOMEOWNERS
GET GROWING WITH POLLINATOR GARDENS,
SUCCULENTS, FOODSCAPING, AND MORE

FLORIDA ROOTS:
THE GARDENS WITHIN THE BRICKS

TEACHING TEACHERS
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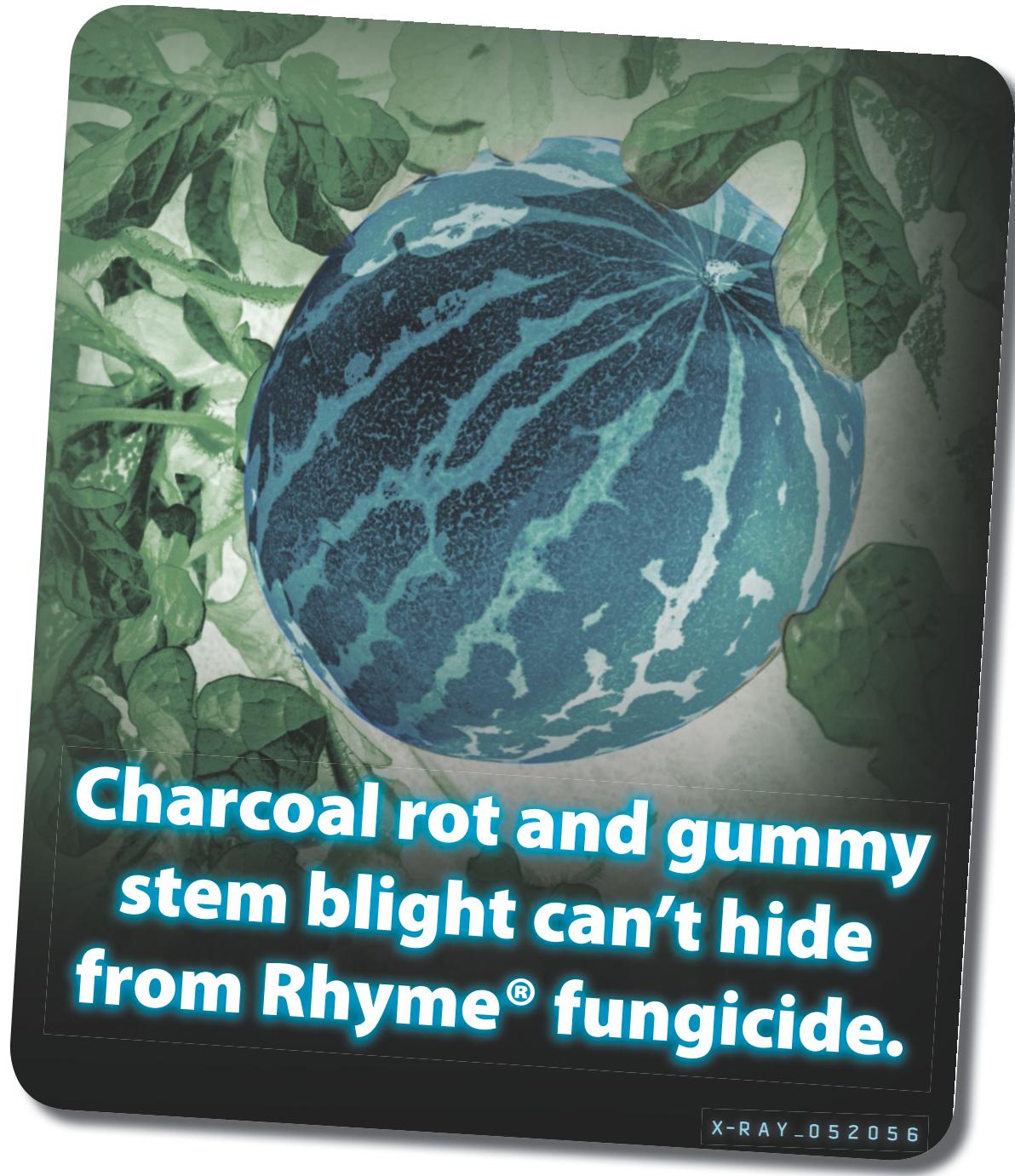
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Features

10 ON THE WATCH FOR STRANGLES

As the number of Strangles cases increased this past year, the equine community should be on high alert and know what to look for. Are you familiar with the common signs and symptoms of strangles? If not, continue reading on page 10 to find out.

14 LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

When it comes to livestock and landscape, not every shrub is safe to munch on. Check out this article to find some common, yet toxic, ornamental plants that you might have in your own landscape.

20 2018 LANDSCAPING & GARDENING TRENDS

Homeowners are expanding their living spaces outdoors, and their growing spaces indoors, as they seek to surround themselves with nature that is more than just pleasing to the eye.

25 THE FIRST OF MANY WINNERS

The Fertilizer Institute announced its 4R Nutrient Stewardship awards, and a Florida citrus grower and retail partner are one of only five pairs from across the country to be honored with the award.

32 TEACHING TEACHERS AT PLANT CAMP

A camp offered by UF/IFAS for Florida educators has opened its applications. With only a limited number of seats available, we are encouraging all educators to get their applications in fast! This plant camp will go in depth about all you need to know about Florida flora and fauna.

For more photography from this edition, visit our website at FloridaAgNews.com.

On the Cover

A bird bath gets a makeover as a succulent dish garden, featuring Crassula and Echeveria plants. To learn more about trends and inspiring ideas for your landscape, turn to page 20.



photo by LUIS BETANCOURT

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PUBLISHER LETTER

NELSON KIRKLAND, *Publisher*
nelson@centralfloridamediagroup.com

Let's Get Growing in 2018

HAPPY NEW YEAR, and welcome to the Horticulture, Floriculture, and Land Management edition of *Central Florida Ag News*! If you're new to CFAN, thanks for joining us. We hope from this point forward you will follow along with every issue. If you're a loyal reader, you're in for a treat, because there's a lot to look forward to in this edition.

The term, "Foodscaping" for example, is a rising movement we're seeing all across Florida. You might even be doing it already in your own yard without even giving it the name. Foodscaping is when you incorporate food-bearing plants into your landscape. The horticulture feature in this edition addresses this trend, and many others on the rise, which we predict you will continue to see more of in backyards all across Central Florida.

There are other interesting growing techniques on the rise in residential landscapes, such as hydroponics, pollinator gardens, and herb gardens— but I won't steal the thunder of the story. You have to read it to find out more! Plus, our Recipe Spotlight in this edition talks about another topic on the rise— edible plants. (You're seeing these more in restaurants and grocery stores for a reason.)

On another important note, whether you're a rancher or a resident living near animals, you will definitely want to read the cattle feature in this edition, which talks about some beautiful ornamentals that are actually poisonous to livestock. There's something for everyone.

Hopefully this edition and many more inspires and encourages you to "get growing" in your own yard, as well as support your local farmers. If you haven't heard of it already, consider learning more about your local farmers and ranchers by going on the Central Florida Farm Tour. You can read more about it on page 17. Then, of course, there are numerous other ways to take part in your ag community, such as going to local farmers' markets, supporting the local youth fair, attending ranch rodeos, and more. You can find out about local agriculture events coming up near you on page 30. Thanks for reading CFAN, and we're looking forward to another great year of being the "voice of agriculture for our region." **ag**

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Columns

7 RESOLVE TO SUPPORT THE FARM COMMUNITY

As the new year has begun, odds are you have created a list of goals or resolutions in which you wish to accomplish by the completion of this year. Have you ever stopped to think, "I wonder what a farmers list would look like?" Well, here is your chance!

10 PROTECTING YOUR HORSE FROM WEST NILE VIRUS

Aside from Strangles, the West Nile Virus is another one horse owners should be on the lookout for. Check out Dr. Katie Hennessy's expert column to find more out about WNV and what you can do to protect your horses from it.

14 RESOLUTION IDEA – BE A HUNTER ON A MISSION

In your list of resolutions, it's not too late to add one more! If you are an outdoorsman who enjoys hunting as a favorite pastime, become a hunter on a mission. Donate your meat to the Wild Game Food Bank and allow organizations who feed the hungry to use your game.

25 ECONOMIC FACTS ABOUT FLORIDA FORESTRY

Oftentimes, when you think about Florida agriculture, the forestry department doesn't necessarily come to mind right off the bat. However, recently it was reported to be one of Florida's largest agricultural commodity groups in terms of economic impact. Find out more about the forest industry in Don Harden's expert column.

26 FLORIDA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION HOSTS GENETICS TECHNOLOGY LECTURESHIP

If you are new to the cattle industry, one thing that is just as important as grazable pasture land is herd genetics. Knowing what to look for and how to find it is an extremely important aspect. Learn such things at an upcoming two day lectureship hosted by Florida Cattlemen's Association.

28 SOIL HEALTH AND YOUR GROVE

Soil is just like a snowflake; none the same. So knowing what exactly your soil needs and not basing it off what your neighbor's soil needs is very important. The nature of your soil determines your success, so make sure to be putting it at the top of your priority list.

32 LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT IQF

Ben Adams, Jr. educates us on individually quick frozen (IQF) foods and the background of them. In his column he also breaks down the intensive process of IQF and what IQF products his company, Adams Cold Storage, carries.

36 PREPARE YOUR LAWN AND GARDEN FOR A GREAT YEAR

In the month of January, there are tons of things to do to your gardens to ensure greatness from them. Take a look at Mr. Doty's column to see what things you should be doing to your home and garden.



Here for the grower, yesterday, today and tomorrow.



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Commissioner's AgriCorner

A Permanent Commitment

by COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE ADAM H. PUTNAM

FLORIDA IS HOME to more than 1.5 million veterans and more than 20 military bases, and my goal is for the Sunshine State to be the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. While there truly is not enough that we can do to show our gratitude, we should do everything we possibly can to thank our active military members and veterans for their service to our country. One way we're working to show Florida's veterans gratitude is through our "Operation Outdoor Freedom" program.

I recently had the honor to help open a camp along a quiet stretch of the Peace River in southwest Florida solely dedicated to providing disabled veterans with outdoor experiences at no cost. The camp, the second of its kind in the state, is part of "Operation Outdoor Freedom," a program we launched in 2011 to provide wounded veterans with hunting, fishing and canoeing activities. To date, nearly 3,500 veterans have participated in outdoor experiences through this one-of-a-kind program.

Thanks to generous donations of time, skill and resources, this brand-new facility has two bunkhouses that sleep 20, a screened outdoor kitchen, a fire pit, a dining area, a restroom



facility and more - everything one could need to enjoy an overnight stay in the wilderness. The serene camp is located in Arcadia in the Peace River State Forest, which spans 5,000 acres.

What started as a way to say "thank you" has become a form of therapy for our veterans. Therapy so often occurs in nature. All of us who spend time outdoors have a notion of that, but these veterans know it in a profound way. As beautiful as our natural resources are, and as wonderful as our creation is here in Florida, none of us would have the liberty or luxury to enjoy it if it weren't for the freedoms that our veterans secured.

While the veterans enjoy Florida's beautiful outdoors with their brothers and sisters in arms, they experience much more than just hunting or fishing. They share their common experiences, share their common frustrations, and share tips and ideas on ways they've dealt with challenges in their recovery and rehabilitation. The therapeutic value of "Operation Outdoor Freedom" hunts and fishing trips takes place at the top of a tree stand, on the bow of a boat and sitting around a campfire at the end of the day.

This new facility is a permanent commitment from the State of Florida to the men and women who put it all on the line to make our liberties and our freedoms, that we so often take for granted, even possible. "Operation Outdoor Freedom" is a special way of connecting our natural resources that we're blessed to have in our state with our most precious natural resource, which are the men and women who are willing to put their lives on the line for the rest of us. **ag**

RESOLVE TO SUPPORT THE FARM COMMUNITY

IF HEADING INTO 2018, you made resolutions for the new year, I hope that at this point in January you're still keeping them—or at least most of them. A few of them, maybe? I know some folks who list goals for a new year rather than make resolutions. They say it's more practical to do that, adding that goals are less rigid than resolutions and more achievable. There might be something to that.

The Old Farmer's Almanac (almanac.com) tells us that the New Year's resolution tradition actually goes back to ancient times. "The new year is a natural time to reflect and resolve to change or improve how we live our lives," an online Almanac article states. A typical resolution by the Babylonians more than 4,000 years ago was to return borrowed farm equipment.

Offering advice to would-be resolution makers in mid-December, the Almanac coached that resolutions should be simple, limited in number, specific, measurable, and (importantly) doable—much like annual goals for any business or organization.

For farmers, the resolution options have few bounds, and it's not too late to list them or fine-tune the ones you've already made. (You won't have trouble getting a Mulligan for January from me.) Good ideas, if you need them, can be found at several online venues, including agriculture.com, thatsfarming.com, capitalpress.com (search for

"resolutions"), cropinsurancesolutions.com, and alltech.com.

A particularly interesting list of resolutions for farmers, a top-10 doable list, can be found at farms.com/ag-industry-news/10-new-year-s-resolutions-for-farmers/. Without the detail, the list goes like this:

1. Support the farming community.
2. Embrace technology/innovation.
3. Evaluate the future.
4. Set aside down time.
5. Attend farm shows.
6. Engage with the general public.
7. Increase the commitment to safety.
8. Try something new.
9. Become an "agvocate."
10. Be active on social media.

Even for nonfarmers, for folks not directly involved with agriculture, there's an item here that would look good on everyone's list of resolutions, and that would be No. 1—Support the farming community. Local farmers need that support—your love, your attention, your prayers, and your purchases. Buy local. Buy "Fresh From Florida" (freshfromflorida.com).

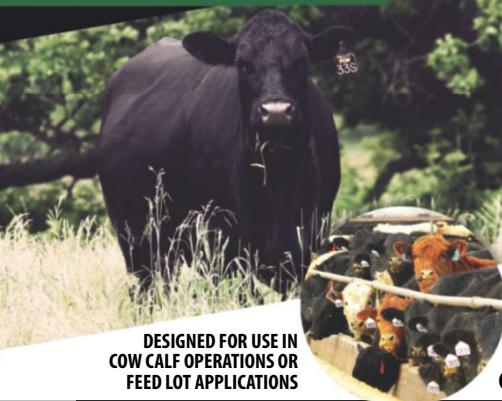


by BAXTER TROUTMAN

This column is sponsored by Labor Solutions.

BIO: Baxter Troutman is founder and chief executive officer of Labor Solutions, a staffing company with offices in Bartow, Winter Haven, Lake Wales, and Arcadia. He also currently serves as president of the Florida AgriTourism Association board of directors. You can visit his Dark Hammock Legacy Ranch online at www.DH-LR.com. A cattle rancher and citrus grower who served in the Florida House of Representatives, Troutman understands the challenges and concerns of today's farmer.

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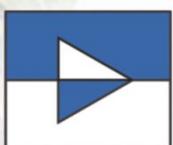
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Florida Roots

The Gardens Within the Bricks: Historical Botanical Grounds Inside the Legoland Florida Resort

IF YOU'RE A CHILD in Florida—or any other part of the country for that matter—going to Legoland Florida Resort in Winter Haven is likely one of your favorite things. However, older Floridians and long-time visitors to The Sunshine State likely remember the attraction under a different name: Cypress Gardens. Opened in 1936 by Dick Pope, Sr. and his wife Julie, it claimed to be the first commercial theme park aimed at attracting tourists. The attraction became a mainstay of the authentic Florida vacation, offering entertainment like acrobatic water ski shows and the Southern Belles in their colorful hoop skirts in addition to the native and exotic flora of the botanical gardens.

Take the time to *stop* and *smell* the azaleas and camellias, and explore a part of Florida's past.

The attraction offered many firsts and notable happenings for Floridians and tourists alike. A Banyan tree—a fig tree that grows to massive proportions and is sacred and revered in many cultures throughout its native India, Asia, Australia and surrounding tropical

locales- was planted in the early years of the park and soon grew to an impressive size.

The gardens changed many hands over the years, and it looked like they would have to close the doors for good in 2009. However, a year later, the owners of all

continued on page 16

PROTECTING YOUR HORSE FROM WEST NILE VIRUS

WEST NILE VIRUS (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that is primarily a bird disease but can infect any mammal, including horses and humans. It's maintained by infected birds in the wild as they contain a high level of the virus in their blood. Humans and horses are considered "dead end hosts" since mosquitoes appear unable to ingest sufficient amounts of the replicating virus to allow it to be passed between humans or horses.

The clinical signs of WNV range from mild flu type symptoms to potentially fatal encephalitis (inflammation of the brain tissue). Many horses do not develop clinical signs of the illness and recover without incident. Horses that do show signs may develop a fever, appear dull, are lethargic or have inappetence. Some abnormal behaviors include incoordination, weakness, muscle twitches, seizures, lip smacking, and an inability to rise. You should consult your veterinarian if your horse exhibits any abnormal or neurological behavior to rule out WNV or other neurological diseases including rabies, equine herpes virus-1, eastern or western encephalitis, trauma, or other causes.

There is no anti-viral treatment for WNV so horses are supported with anti-inflammatories, nutritional and fluid support, and kept in a safe environment. The more neurologic signs a horse is showing the worse the prognosis.

The best way to protect your horse from WNV, eastern or western encephalitis or rabies is with annual vaccination and with regular mosquito control. The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) recommends that the WNV vaccine should be incorporated in your horse's annual core vaccine protocol.



by DR. KATIE HENNESSY

This column is sponsored by Polk Equine.

BIO: Dr. Katie Hennessy graduated from the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine in 2008 with a degree in large animal health and equine medicine. She completed an advanced internship at The Equine Medical Center of Ocala and is currently the owner and practicing veterinarian at Polk Equine. Her expertise ranges from small and exotic creatures to large animals, specializing in equine medicine.

FEATURE | equine

ON the WATCH for STRANGLES

Florida Equine Community Reported More Than 40 Cases in Past Year

by MARY TOOTHMAN

THE FLORIDA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has confirmed several recent additional premises with strangles in the state — bringing the total number to 42 in the past year.

Strangles, a highly contagious upper respiratory disease found in horses, was first reported in the 13th century and can now be found worldwide.

Being highly contagious, strangles is a reportable disease in the state of Florida. Cases have been reported most recently in Palm Beach County, Manatee County and Volusia County.

To check the latest reports, go to equinediseasecc.org/alerts/outbreaks. The Equine Disease Communication Center (EDCC) works to protect horses and the horse industry from the threat of infectious diseases. Its online communication system is designed to seek and report real-time information about disease outbreaks in a manner similar to the way Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) alerts the human population about diseases in people.

Although rare, cases of strangles have caused bacteremia and meningitis in humans and fatal pneumonia in a camel. Positive cases of strangles in equids must be reported.

The strangles organism — *Streptococcus equi* ssp. *equi* — can be transmitted by direct contact with nasal or ocular secretions or lymph node discharge from infected horses. It

can also be passed on by indirect exposure to contaminated trailers, stalls, riding equipment, buckets, halters, lead ropes, brushes or clothing.

The incubation period typically ranges between two and six days but may last up to 14 days.

How can you watch out for this disease? Symptoms may include fever of 103 degrees or higher, nasal discharge, general malaise, pharyngitis, dysphagia, upper airway stridor and respiratory distress. Clinical signs are often age-related, with older horses exhibiting milder symptoms of shorter duration.

Veterinarians primarily diagnose strangles by culturing nasal swabs, nasal washes, or via aspirations from abscesses. Nasal washes generally yield better results than nasal swabs due to sampling of a greater surface area.

Opinions vary about the appropriate treatment of horses with strangles. Experts recommend a check with your veterinarian to determine which treatment is right for your horse. There are also vaccine options.

Treatment often consists of rest, water, moistened food and a clean, dry stall, which is generally sufficient for most cases. There are preventative measures, such as establishing high standards of management practices.

Horses being introduced to a new herd should be isolated for a minimum of three weeks and should be monitored at least twice per day to watch for fever, nasal discharge, lymph node enlargement and/or dyspnea. If possible, new additions should be screened. Quarantines may be issued on premises affected by strangles.

Although human cases are rare, it is recommended that immune-compromised individuals take precautions to avoid exposure to infected horses.

To report strangles or other reportable diseases, call (850) 410-0900 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. For after-hours reporting, call 1-800-342-5869 or email RAD@FreshFromFlorida.com **ag**

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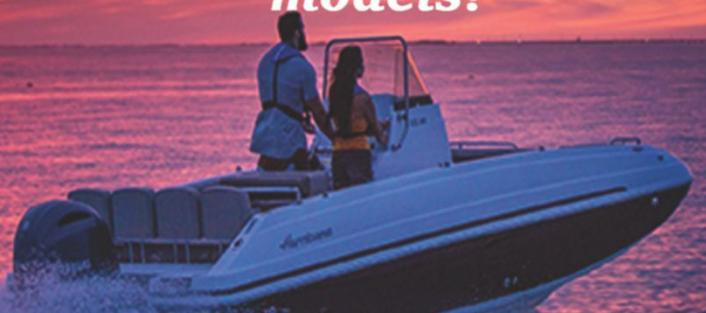
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president's column



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IN HIS RECENT address at the American Farm Bureau Federation Convention, President Trump praised farmers for their values of hard work and sheer determination. President Trump said, "We are witnessing a new era of patriotism, prosperity, and pride—and at the forefront of this exciting new chapter is the great American farmer." I appreciate these comments along with the President's actions related to tax reform and the roll back of excessive government regulations like the Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) Rule. In his speech Trump also said, "The men and women in this room come from different backgrounds and from all across our land, but each of you carries the same title that's been proudly borne by patriots and pioneers, inventors and entrepreneurs, the title of—very proudly—American farmer." I couldn't agree more, and I hope that we will continue to see an evolving business climate where farmers and ranchers can do what we do best—farm.

It is our nature that agriculture will not sit back as mere spectators while others make decisions that affect our ability to farm. The only way to possibly ensure that programs will work toward long-term sustainability is for farmers to be a part of the process. As the agriculture community struggles to recover from Hurricane Irma, efforts continue to seek both immediate relief as well as long-term sustainability through well vetted programs, particularly within the Florida citrus industry. From incentives provided in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act sponsored by Rep. Vern Buchanan, to the federal disaster relief/rebuild bill that passed the House in December and now awaits Senate approval, industry leaders are working hard to pave the path to resurgence. We appreciate the leadership of the growers and elected officials driving this process. For more information on these and other citrus industry issues, visit flcitrusmutual.com.

We encourage our members to advocate for agriculture at every opportunity, whether at the federal, state, or local level. Florida Farm Bureau Days in Tallahassee will be held January 29 & 30, and Polk County Farm Bureau representatives will meet with legislators to continue to promote and protect the business interests of Polk farmers and ranchers. Information on Florida Farm Bureau 2018 legislative priorities can be found at floridafarmbureau.org/state-advocacy/.

We congratulate PCFB member [Michael Rogalsky](#) for his demonstration of advocacy in making it all the way to the "Sweet Sixteen" in the American Farm Bureau Discussion Meet contest. **Great job Michael!**

The new year is in full swing with the announcement of the following PCFB events. **Please mark your calendars and plan to participate in these 2018 events:**

Polk County Agri-Fest	March 12 – 16 & March 19 – 23	10:00 a.m. – Noon Extension/Ag Center, Bartow
Legislative Wrap-Up	April 3	11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. W.H. Stuart Center, Bartow
Ag Deputy Luncheon	April 19	11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. PCFB Office, Bartow
Harvest Celebration	May 4	6:00 p.m. Lake Eva Banquet Hall, Haines City

Best wishes from Polk County Farm Bureau for a blessed and prosperous new year.

Sincerely,

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RESOLUTION IDEA— BE A HUNTER ON A MISSION

IT'S A NEW YEAR, and many people are looking to improve themselves in some way or another. It's a time for reflection, for considering our paths, and resolving to do more for ourselves and our communities. Here at the Wild Game Food Bank, we are committed to connecting hunters with the needy by making it possible to donate their wild game to organizations that can use the meat to help feed the hungry. We encourage hunters to partake in their favorite pastime while making sure good meat doesn't go to waste.

Here in Florida, there are several animals that can be hunted year-round, so hunters can enjoy their sport while making regular contributions to Wild Game Food Bank. Wild hogs, for example, make excellent donations. The hogs are considered an invasive species and destroy the habitats of native Florida creatures as well as Florida farmland, so hunting hogs is encouraged. They are found in every Florida county and can be trapped or shot without hunting.

Rabbits can also be taken year-round, and up to 12 can be taken daily using any legal rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader, crossbow, bow, or pistol. Unfortunately, we do not accept donations of rabbit meat or other small game, but they can still be a fun side project to hunt.

We appreciate all of the hunters on a mission to help feed others that keep our organization running smoothly year-round. Field-dressed hogs are a great boon to the organizations that we provide meat to. We have locations in Polk, DeSoto, and Hillsborough counties ready to accept your harvests. This is a great time to get out and enjoy the thrill of the hunt and make a valuable contribution to your community.



by CAITLIN MEADOWS

This column is sponsored by Wild Game Food Bank.

BIO: Caitlin Meadows is the founder of Wild Game Food Bank. She proudly serves the community in this capacity while enjoying life as a wife, mom, and REALTOR®. A UF graduate and Gainesville native, Caitlin has called Polk County home for the last ten years. Her husband, an avid hunter and Polk County native, is what helped fuel the inspiration behind WGFB. Caitlin and her husband enjoy spending time outdoors with their son, attending church, and managing their cattle. To learn more about WGFB, go to wildgamefoodbank.com

FEATURE | cattle



► LANTANA

LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING

Beautiful Ornamentals that are Dangerous for Livestock

by TERESA SCHIFFER

RAISING LIVESTOCK can be a tricky business. There are a lot of details to attend to, especially when it comes to proper nutrition. It can be tempting to simply turn creatures out into the field and let them rummage on their own, but this can be disastrous if they wind up consuming toxic plants. It may surprise you to learn how many toxic plants are out there, some wild growing weeds and some deliberately planted ornamentals. Some of these plants are capable of killing even large animals, so it's good to learn to recognize some common threats to your livestock's well-being, and take control measures.

Bridget Carlisle, the Livestock Extension Agent for UF/IFAS, reminds us that generally animals will leave poisonous plants alone on their own. The real danger comes during colder months, when grazable pasture can become diminished. This can result in cattle and horses consuming plants they would normally avoid. "Most of the poisonous plants they're not going to eat," Ms. Carlisle says, "but there are certain ones they are less careful about." That's why it's important to identify potential threats and take steps to protect your animals.

► **LANTANA.** This common ornamental shrub is often planted to attract butterflies, and it spreads easily. It is often found growing along fence rows and tree lines. The whole plant is toxic and contains a toxin called lantanin. Large quantities of this plant can cause acute toxicity, while lower amounts

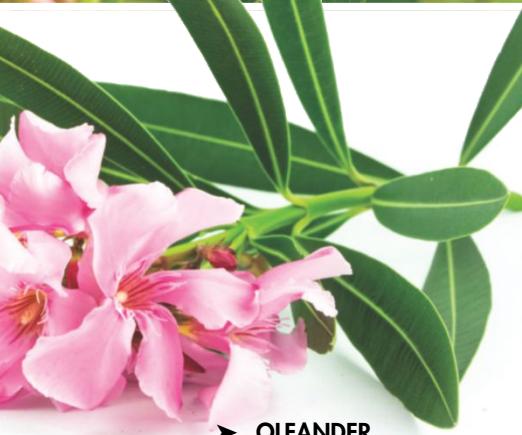
can cause mouth sores and skin cracking. Lantana can be controlled with a tank mix of PastureGard and GrazonNext.

► **MILKWEED.** This popular butterfly plant is grown by many people. It is the preferred food of monarch butterflies. However, this plant can also present a danger to livestock, as well as to dogs. Milkweed has a milky sap, and the general rule of thumb is that if a plant has a milky sap it is most likely toxic. Best to keep this one in a carefully contained ornamental garden.

► **SHOWY CROTALARIA.** Also known as showy rattlebox, this legume was originally brought to Florida during the early twentieth century for use as a nitrogen-fixing cover crop. Unfortunately, it also contains a lot of toxic alkaloids. The entire plant is toxic, particularly the seeds. The main toxin



► MILKWEED



► OLEANDER

The *real* danger comes during colder months, when grazable pasture can become diminished.

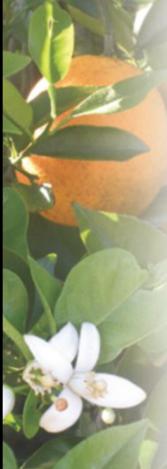
is called monocrotaline, and the symptoms of ingestion include weakness and confusion. Jaundice may also be evident due to damage to the liver. An animal may die months after eating this plant. Glyphosate or triclopyr is probably your best option for controlling this plant.

► **OLEANDER.** "A lot of people like to plant oleander, and that's very poisonous as well," says Ms. Carlisle. It is an extremely toxic plant that can kill a cow with as little as 10 to 25 grams of leaves. It is an easy-care, fast-growing shrub or tree, so it is popular as a hedge plant. There are two main toxins present in oleander, oleandroside and nerioside, both identified as glycosides.

► **CREEPING INDIGO.** The biggest problem with creeping indigo is that horses will develop a taste for it. Normally, animals tend to avoid poisonous plants. This is not the case with horses and creeping indigo. Horses will enthusiastically consume creeping indigo, which can lead to tongue ulcers and convulsions. GrazonNext is a suitable control for creeping indigo.

How do you know if an animal has been poisoned? There are symptoms to be aware of, including digestive and neurological problems. Diarrhea, a loss of coordination, and aimless walking are some of the signs to watch for. "Sometimes they do a thing called 'head pressing,'" Ms. Carlisle describes, "where they push their head against a wall or something like that." They may also have pale membranes when you push on their gums, showing poor capillary refill. An animal may act disoriented, refuse feed, or drink more water than usual. Wasting, holding their head down, and a shaggy coat are also signs of poisoning. If you suspect that your animal has ingested something toxic, contact your veterinarian or your local extension agent for advice.

You can avoid problems with toxic plants by not planting them. It is also recommended to maintain adequate pasture and prevent overgrazing so animals will have a safe food source. **ag**



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the Legoland theme parks bought the entire property. They constructed the popular theme park around the beloved botanical gardens, preserving the history of the gardens and offering a successful attraction that will ensure the gardens and their slice of authentic Florida endure - complete with the Banyan tree.

We sat down with Legoland representative, Chloe Boehm, to ask a few questions on the care and upkeep of these historic and extensive gardens.

CENTRAL FLORIDA AG NEWS (CFAN): *What is the history of Legoland's botanical gardens?*

planted as a seedling in 1939.

CFAN: *What are some of the main plants, flowering and otherwise, found in the gardens, and how are plants chosen for the gardens?*

BOEHM: Our historical botanical gardens display a variety of beautiful plants and flowers including lush Bougainvillea, bright Azalea and the massive Banyan tree.

CFAN: *What goes into the care of the gardens?*

BOEHM: Our model citizens take pride in the care

CHLOE BOEHM: The beautiful and historic botanical gardens have been restored to pristine condition, and the collection of native plants, including Azaleas and Camellias, have been reclaimed and combined with a range of exotic species to create a horticultural masterpiece. Still standing sentinel in the garden is the vast Banyan tree that was

and upkeep of the historical gardens through routine trimming, watering and fertilization to keep the gardens in perfect condition for guests.

CFAN: *How often do you change the landscaping, and for what reasons?*

BOEHM: During the holiday season, guests can find poinsettias placed throughout the gardens and theme park for a special Christmas touch.

CFAN: *What measures do you take to protect the gardens from damage, such as from cold, animals, or patrons?*

BOEHM: We take great care of the plants and flowers, protecting them from Florida's wide range of elements including hurricanes and cooler temperatures. When we experience temperatures around 34 degrees, natural gas heaters are placed around the Banyan to protect it from the cold.

Next time you take your children to Legoland, make sure to stop by the botanical gardens, and experience a step back in time to a piece of authentic Florida. Take the time to stop and smell the azaleas and camellias, and explore a part of Florida's past. **ag**



From the Editor's Desk

Mark Your Calendars for these 'Ag-Ventures'

AT THE BEGINNING of the year, there is so much going on in the ag community it's difficult to cover it all, but we try. That's why we have doubled the size of our community calendar in this edition. Plus, if you stay connected with us on Facebook (go to Facebook.com/CentralFloridaAgNews and follow), you can get updated on all the upcoming events. For me, there are two events coming up that are must-do.

The first one coming up on the calendar is the Central Florida Farm Tour. Being held on January 20 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., families and local groups have the chance to hop in a car, van, or bus and visit local farms in the region. These agriculture operations are real working farms, and many of them are only open to the public for this exclusive event. Attendees will be able to visit a goat farm, citrus/cattle farm, organic farm, a beekeeper, a fish/organic farm, and so much more! For one low price of \$20 per vehicle, you can bring as many people as your car will transport and get a taste of agriculture at its finest.

This driving tour is perfect for families, gardening enthusiasts, school field trips, church groups, and more. With your purchase, you'll receive a passport, upon which you can plan your adventure and go to all the farms or just the ones that seem most interesting to you. For more information or to purchase your passport to your next "ag-venture," go to CentralFloridaFarmTour.com.

CELESTE JO WALLS, Editor
celeste.walls@centralfloridamediagroup.com



The other event around the corner is the annual Polk County Agri-Fest. This cooperative event between Polk County Farm Bureau, Polk County Public Schools, the Polk County Extension Office, and the local ag industry hosts more than 6,000 fourth grade students and 300 teachers. Volunteers work hard to make this event a hands-on, interactive, and fun 10-day event where kids from all around the region can participate in stations focusing on citrus, beef cattle, phosphate, beekeeping, horticulture, forestry, aquaculture, blueberries, and small farms. This year's event will be held from March 12-16 and March 19-23. If you are interested in making sure your fourth-grade class can attend this year's or next year's event, contact Polk County Farm Bureau at (863) 533-0561. Interested volunteers should go to pcfb.org/get-involved/programs/agifest/.

I've been to both of these events—on the Central Florida Farm Tour with my family and Polk County Agri-Fest as a volunteer. If you're looking for fun ways to learn more about our local ag community, there's no better way to start! **ag**

Volunteer at the **2018 Polk County Agri-Fest**

MARCH 12-16 and 19-23, 9:00 a.m. to Noon.
Polk County Ag Center, 1702 Highway 17 South, Bartow

Volunteers make Agri-Fest possible!

- Over 6,000 students attend annually.
- Stations include: citrus, small farms, horticulture, phosphate, beef, and forestry.
- Students explore interactive exhibits & hands-on workshops.
- Positions include: group leaders, citrus station kitchen assistants, and station helpers.



To volunteer for one day or more, please contact
Lori Kuehl, lorik@pcfb.org or 863-533-0561, ext. 112.
Or, register online at pcfb.org/events.



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Ag Time WITH ABBY

A Fair for All Ages

AS MANY OF YOU may know, the fair is coming to town! That's right—it's time to pull out your old boots from the back of your closet, dust off your cowboy hat, and head down to Bartow for the 71st Annual Polk County Youth Fair.

As a past exhibitor, now a volunteer, I have seen firsthand what all goes into the making of the fair. Numerous hours are spent on planning and debating and going through the logistics of how to make everything work as smoothly and efficiently as it possibly can. Most of the volunteers and committee chairs have been working with the fair since they graduated high school while others are a little more new and wanting to extend a helping hand.

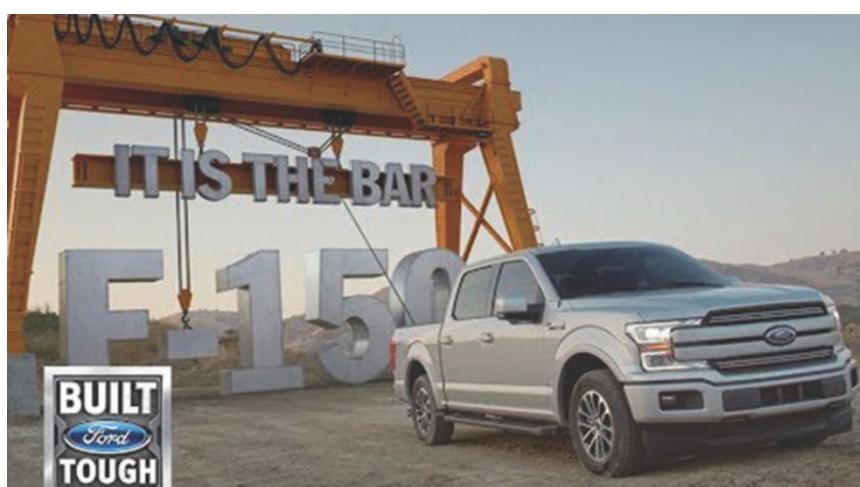
If you have never attended the youth fair before, don't expect popcorn, cotton candy, and rides galore. What makes the Polk County Youth Fair so unique is that it is the largest youth fair in the state of Florida with no midway. Everything at the fair is centered around the youth participants and showcasing their projects. From market hogs to homemade jams, you can find it all on the fairgrounds.

Another thing that makes it so unique is the fact that it is a fair for all ages. Young or old, come one come all. My granny loved coming to the fair, seeing mine and my brothers animals and going inside the Stuart Center to see homemade crafts, jams, cakes, and table settings. She and her sister never missed the week at the fair! It gave them a chance to get out of their houses, a change in scenery (and smell!), and be able to spend time talking to the most well mannered students in the state. "Yes ma'am," "no

ma'am," shaking your hand, and holding the door open—these are some more things you will find around the fair.

Aside from being senior friendly, the fair is also a great place to bring your young children. This is a chance for them to learn about where their food comes from and who raises it. This also may be the place that sparks their interest and love for agriculture. For children the ages of eight-years-old and above, they can join a 4-H club, and what better way to find a club to join than when they are all competing together? This serves as an opportunity to see what clubs are close to your home and are extremely active, and to be able to talk to the club advisor. It is also a great time to observe and talk to exhibitors and find out what all goes into their project, so that you can be prepared for the following year.

If your child is younger than the age of eight, I encourage you to come out and show them all the different options they have to show. Then, find Mrs. Luann Sparks; she is the coordinator for the Cloverbud Fair, which is for children ages five to seven years old. The Cloverbud fair is a one day fair that prepares the participants for their upcoming years showing in large fairs. It's a great opportunity to prepare both the parents and exhibitors.



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The annual Polk County Youth Fair is one that has no comparison—you just have to experience it yourself. It's one so great even Charlie Belcher has visited a time or two. If you are already planning on coming to the fair, make sure to bring a friend that has never been before. If you have never been and are thinking about stopping by, I encourage you to do so! To find a schedule of events, go to pcyf.net and click "2018 PCYF Rules," then scroll down to the fifth page, where you will find a schedule of events.

That wraps things up for this month. I look forward to seeing you all at Polk County Youth Fair! While you are attending the fair and mingling with agriculturalists of all ages, **make sure to thank a farmer!** **ag**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Abby Crawford is currently enrolled at Warner University, majoring in Agriculture Studies with hopes to go into the agriculture education or communications field. She is the former president of the Haines City High School FFA chapter as well as the voice behind 97 Country's segment, "Ag Time with Abby," which airs the first Friday of every month during the Breakfast Club with Roger and Melissa. Abby is also the 2014 Polk County Farm Bureau Youth Speech Contest Winner. For questions, FFA news, or FFA story ideas, email Abby at abigailreis@gmail.com.



WILD GAME FOOD BANK

Hunters on a Mission

Wild Game Food Bank was founded in September of 2013, and is on a mission to provide wild game meat to those in need in Central Florida. We have drop-off locations in Polk, Hillsborough, and DeSoto Counties.

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Landscaping & Gardening Trends

Homeowners Get Growing with Plants for Pollinators, Succulents, Foodscaping, and More

story by CHERYL ROGERS
photos by LUIS BETANCOURT

HEDES out of rosemary? Purple cabbage interspersed with croton shrubs? Don't be surprised. People seem to be looking for something healthy—and something different—in the landscaping and gardening scene.

Vegetable gardening, a long-term trend, continues to be popular. It drew 124,465 page views at the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension website in 2017, ranking second place to an article about diversity in the workplace.

But in 2017, homeowners were more likely to have foodscapes that mix plants like roses with collard greens and spinach. Or, grow their own lettuces and tomatoes hydroponically. In 2018, that trend is expected to continue.

WHERE FOODSCAPING STEMS FROM

"The big thing for people in general is wellness. They have a concern with how healthy their food is," explains Linda Adams, chief operations officer for the Orlando-based Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA).

Thanks to LED, or light-emitting diode lighting, homeowners are more likely to grow food outside and/or inside. Hence, the rise of kitchen gardens where fresh herbs are just a snip away. Or hydroponics, where homeowners-turned-growers can control what, if any, pesticides are used.

People seem to want health benefits they can get from surrounding themselves with nature. "People are creating outdoor rooms, patios, and specified gardens (meditation garden, yoga garden)," Adams says. "They're extending their living space in the outdoors. The one you hear most about is outdoor kitchens. They have been very big."

INDOOR PLANTS AND PURPLE POWER

People also are bringing the outdoors under roof. "One of the things in 2017 that really took off is indoor plants," Adams continues. "Plants are being used as interior decor much more than they use to be."

There is good reason: plants can absorb toxins, boost oxygen levels in the home, and reduce stress. Additionally, they are something to nurture. "People move a lot and plants are easy to move," she says.

A popular indoor trend is glass terrariums, which tend to be small and easier to grow. They don't require much water; in fact, overwatering can kill them.

"The more we connect with nature, the studies show, the better for our physical health, our mental health, and our emotional health," Adams says. "People are wanting to live in situations where that's easy to do."

Purple is the new trendy color, perhaps because of Pantone's 2018 Color of the Year: ultra violet. For health, think purple antioxidants, or anthocyanins, that help fight cancer and more. Garden Media's Garden Trends Report 2018 notes purple foods promote mental strength—and includes a list of purple plants to grow at home. Included are acai berries, beets, black raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, Goji berries, eggplant, plums, purple cabbage, purple carrots, and purple sweet potatoes.

DIVERSE AND COHESIVE

Consumers seem more conscious about water use, evidenced by a trend towards more Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ (FFL) program principles, as well as succulent plant dishes.

The succulent plants, most notably the cactus, have fleshy thick leaves and don't require much water. They also tend to be small. Other examples include aloe vera, happy bean, elephant bush, blue chalk sticks, and tiger's jaw.

Julie Schelb, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping coordinator in Bartow, sees an interest in the FFL concepts, which include proper fertilization, mulch, managing pests responsibly, recycling yard waste, reducing stormwater runoff and protecting the waterfront.

"I definitely think gardening for pollinators has been a really huge trend that fits in with Florida-Friendly Landscaping," she says. "One of our principles is attracting wildlife."

continued on page 22



See our column on page 28

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HORTICULTURE | continued from page 20



But in 2017, **homeowners** were more likely to have foodscapes that mix plants like roses with collard greens and spinach.



Julie Schelb, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping coordinator in Bartow (left), and **Anne Yasalonis**, a residential horticulture agent/master gardener coordinator with UF/IFAS Extension in Polk County.

Although water efficiency is a core principle, FFL is not about putting a bunch of rocks in your yard with desert plants. "I would never say succulents are the answer. That's not diverse enough," she points out. "That's the complete opposite of what Florida-Friendly is."

FFL entails diversity with trees, shrubs, and groundcover—with every plant in the right place where it has adequate sun, shade and room to grow to full size. Additionally, it should be drought tolerant and appropriate for the area's hardiness

zone (in Polk County that's 9b, with average annual extreme temperatures dipping as low as 25 degrees Fahrenheit).

When a plant is properly placed, it will be healthier and less susceptible to pests and disease. "It all starts with that very first principle: right plant, right place," she explains. "We definitely can protect our resources."

More information is available through The Florida Friendly Landscaping Guide to Plant Selection & Landscape Design, available in print or online at fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/FYN_Plant_Selection_Guide_2015.pdf. For a quick start, there is another short list for Polk County.

UF/IFAS offers some free classes on topics like "Native Plants in the Home Landscape," from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Jan. 25 at Winter Haven Public Library and "Choosing the Right Plant, Right Place for Your Yard," from 10 to 11 a.m. Feb. 1 at Mackay Gardens and Lakeside Preserve. "Backyard Composting" is offered from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Feb. 8 at Bartow Public Library.

WHAT'S UNDER FOOT

When it comes to the lawn, some people seem to be questioning a popular old standby: St. Augustinegrass. The UF/IFAS Electronic Data Information Source (EDIS) website, which had 7.4 million views in 2017, shows high traffic to its web pages for St. Augustine, Bahia, and Zoysiagrass, with all three included in the top 10 pages for 2017. The page views were 43,539, 43,258 and 38,464, respectively.

"Bahiagrass is your best for drought tolerance. All grasses are going to have a little bit of maintenance requirements," says Anne Yasalonis, a residential horticulture agent/master gardener coordinator with UF/IFAS Extension in Polk County. "Each type of lawn grass has at least one pest or designated problem. Nothing is free of all pests."

Some people are ditching the grass for ground covers like Asiatic jasmine, which grows in the full sun and shade, or perennial peanut, a full sun option commonly used on rights of way. Another alternative is Mondo grass, which comes in tall or dwarf varieties

that look like grass, grow in the shade, and don't need mowing.

"A lot of people have issues with lawns," concedes Yasalonis. Whatever you choose to plant, you'll boost your odds of success by following best management practices.

The Extension Service also receives a fair amount of inquiries about pests. It's better to find out what it is, and whether a pesticide spray is needed, instead of reaching for the spray, according to Yasalonis. "We're always here to help," she adds. Inquiries should be directed to the Master Gardener Plant Clinic at (863) 519-1057.

SET AND FORGET VS. SHOWY AND EXOTIC

On the commercial side, Multi County Environmental Horticulture Production UF/IFAS Agent Shawn Steed says the trend is toward “set and forget” plantings. After conferring with FNGLA Tampa Chapter Board of Directors, he reports homeowners are looking to spend less time and resources on landscapes.

“From the landscaper’s perspective, homeowners want water-friendly plants, low maintenance, and cold tolerant plants,” he says. “It seems that environment-friendly plants is the trend going in to 2018.”

Among the most favored plants were crape myrtles, firebush, apostle iris, jasmine, pentas, lantana, and dwarf podocarpus.

But tropical plantings have their fans, in Central Florida and even up north. So don’t be surprised if you see showy yellow and pink tabebuia trees blooming, or pineapples growing alongside camellias. You also might see avocado trees, which ranked nine on that list of UF/IFAS page views, by the way.

In 2018, the trends can be summed up by Adams: “We’re all looking for something new and different.” **ag**



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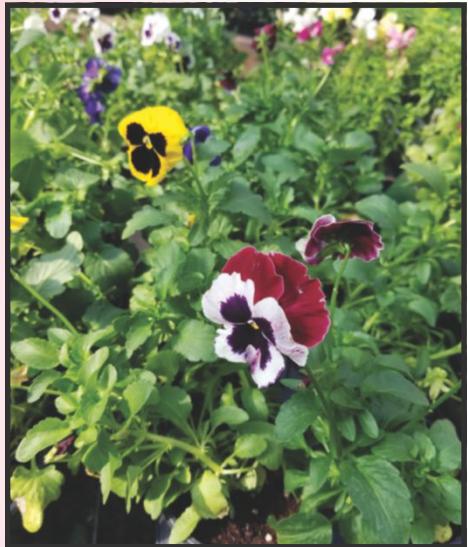
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Smelling floral scents also seems to put us in a good mood and make us feel less anxious.



Multi Snapdragon

Flowers clearly aren't going to eliminate the need for medication, but they may take the edge off during exams or before a major presentation.

Ivy Geranium

Less saturated and brighter colors are generally more relaxing, while bold saturated colors will energize you. A bunch with colors that fall near each other on the color wheel will also be more calming; with the opposite effect ensuing if the colors are opposite each other.



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The **FIRST** of **MANY WINNERS**

Local Citrus Grower Named 2018 4R Advocate by TFI

by ERIKA ALDRICH

IT'S AN HONOR for Florida agriculture, and a testament of the industry's commitment to the environment. "Glenn is the third grower from Florida to win this award," shares David Royal, the Florida Nutrient Stewardship Project Manager with The Nature Conservancy, a charitable environmental organization that aims to conserve land and water. "This is significant with water quality being such a big issue in the state of Florida," he explains.

Fertilizer has always played an important role in agriculture, and it's more important than ever with a growing world population and the need to grow more on less land. It's also become apparent that the unsystematic

use of fertilizers is bad for the environment, causing pollution where excess fertilizer finds its way into waterways.

The 4Rs are the answer to this issue, limiting the use of

fertilizer to those that best meet the crops needs, the exact amount needed, only at the optimal time, and delivered to the place the plant is best able to use it. Growers like Glenn Beck work with fertilizer retailers like Rob Watson and Griffin Fertilizer to ensure the 4R's are part of their operation's nutrient programs. "The 4Rs are a tool that the grower, farmer, and rancher can use to help improve the quality of the water leaving their properties," Royal shares.

Growers can save money on inputs and realize higher quality crops and better harvests, but the main focus of the 4Rs is the land and the water. "Better nutrient management is good for the grower," Royal assures, "but it's also good for the environment." The 4R Nutrient

continued on next page

ECONOMIC FACTS ABOUT FLORIDA FORESTRY

WHEN YOU DISCUSS the big players in Florida agriculture, citrus and beef cattle are usually the topic of conversation, but there's another sector that deserves recognition for bringing a lot of jobs and revenue to The Sunshine State: The Forest Industry. I have a great deal of experience in land purchasing and forestry management, so I was pleased to read a report released at the beginning of this year by UF/IFAS— the Economic Contributions of the Forest Industry and Forest-based Recreation in Florida in 2016— showing the Forest Industry's contributions and continued growth in Florida. I wanted to share some highlights from the report so you have talking points the next time the discussion turns to major sectors in Florida agriculture.

HIGHLIGHTS ON FLORIDA'S FOREST INDUSTRY

The Florida forest industry has been growing at such a

steady pace that it is one of the largest agricultural commodity groups in terms of total economic contributions. According to the report, the Florida forest industry saw \$12.55 billion in sales revenues in 2016, an increase in nearly \$5 billion from 2003, the last time UF/IFAS reported on the forest industry. There were 36,055 Floridians employed directly by the industry in full- and part-time jobs in 2016, a jump of almost 20 percent over 2003 numbers.

Furthermore, when total economic contributions are taken into account, the Florida forest industry generated \$25.05 billion in industry output or revenues and supported 124,104 jobs for Florida citizens.

Finally, nearly half of Florida's land area is forestland, a total of 17.16 million acres, and those acres represent a renewable resource that will continue to contribute to Florida's economy.



by DON HARDEN

This column is sponsored by AgAmerica Lending.

BIO: Donald Harden, a Relationship Manager for AgAmerica Lending, grew up in the cattle and citrus business, managing a family ranch of several thousand cattle and horses. He has more than 30 years of experience in the real estate business, and more than 20 years specializing in agricultural sales. Over the years, Don has been honored to serve the ag community in many facets, including as a director and on the board of the cattlemen's association, as a manufacturer's representative for ag equipment companies, and as a beef cattle specialist for a national feed company. For more information about Don and the AgAmerica team, call 844.238.5312 or visit AgAmerica.com.

FLORIDA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION HOSTS GENETICS TECHNOLOGY LECTURESHIP

IN ADDITION to proper land management of your pasture, genetics is an important topic when it comes to the health and marketability of your beef herd. The technology of genetics, however, has advanced so rapidly in recent years that it can be hard to keep up. A two-day lectureship, the Application of Advanced Genetic Technology in Beef Cattle, will bring attendees up to speed. Held February 22 and 23 at the Florida Cattlemen's Association at 800 Shakerag Road in Kissimmee, the lectureship offers foundational understanding of genetic principles and the knowledge of how to apply the available advanced genetic technologies in real-world applications, such as with seedstock and commercial cattle production.

DETAILS OF THE LECTURESHIP

Held in conjunction by the Florida Cattlemen's Association and Florida Cattlemen's Foundation, the event is sponsored by Neogen Genomics. Presenters include Bob Weaber, Ph.D., an associate professor/Extension specialist with the Animal Sciences and Industry department at Kansas State University, and Matt Spangler, Ph.D., an associate professor/Beef Genetics Extension specialist with the Animal Science Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The lectureship offers attendees the opportunity to develop breeding objectives utilizing tools, such as identifying environmental constraints, considering marketing alternatives, and exploring the economic relevancy of traits. Attendees will leave with a complete understanding of the data and mathematical ratios involved, experience with the various strategies and options available, and the knowledge of how to apply advanced genetic tools.

The lectureship offers cattle ranchers more knowledge and tools to raise a healthier, more marketable beef cattle herd. The cost of the lectureship is \$300 for the two days and lunch

is included. Interested attendees can register at krirm.tamuk.edu/genetics18/.



by MIKE ROBERTS

This column is sponsored by Griffin Fertilizer Co.

BIO: Mike Roberts is the division manager of the Frostproof, Fla.-based Griffin Fertilizer Co. Roberts joined the company in November 2011. He has spent the majority of his career in the fertilizer/agchem industry. Roberts earned a Bachelor of Science degree in citrus production from Florida Southern College in Lakeland. He is currently the chairman of the Florida Fertilizer & Agrichemical Association. For more information, visit griffinfertilizer.com.

CITRUS | continued from previous page



Stewardship Award is for those growers who are excelling at the win-win formula of the 4Rs and improving both the environment and their own operations.

Glenn Beck and his brother, Mark Beck, manage Beck Brothers Citrus, Inc., a family-owned citrus and blueberry operation that was started in the 1950s by their father, George Beck. "Beck Bros. has been a leader within the Florida Citrus Industry for many advancements and changes to the way fertilizer is applied and utilized by Florida citrus growers," Rob Watson shared in his letter nominating the company for the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Award. George was the fertilizer operations manager at the former South Lake Apopka Citrus Growers Cooperative, and Watson assured that George gave his sons "a first-hand understanding from an early age of the important role of fertilizers in the production of citrus."

Today, Beck Brothers, Inc., encompasses 7,500 acres of Florida Citrus in seven counties in Central Florida. Beck Brothers expanded in 1997 to share their knowledge with fellow growers, adding a full-service citrus management program for citrus grove owners.

Griffin Fertilizer, a Division of Ben Hill Griffin, Inc., is a full-service custom dry & liquid fertilizer blender and crop protection products distributor located in Frostproof, Florida. According to salesman Rob Watson, Beck Brothers utilizes the 4Rs in numerous ways, such as taking soil and leaf tissue samples in order to determine the trees' nutrient needs, spacing fertilizer applications to

six times a year rather than just two, the use of a micro-sprinkler irrigation system to deliver liquid fertilizers, and the use of foliar fertilizers and micronutrients, just to name a few.

Beck Brothers also follow the Best Management Practice (BMP) plan for citrus, which now incorporates

the 4R's. Mike Roberts, the Division Manager for Griffin Fertilizer shared that, "As a fertilizer/agchem retailer in Central Florida, I believe it's vitally important that we promote the agronomic, environmental, and economic benefits of the 4R's of nutrient stewardship. With most of our crops being grown on shallow, well drained soils, we must ensure that our production practices minimize any impact to our state's ground water. It's

encouraging to note that most of our customers have already implemented crop-specific BMP's that embrace the 4R framework."

There's no denying the importance of a citrus grower winning this award. "He's the first citrus grower to win it," shares Royal. "We all know the citrus industry is struggling, and what the 4Rs does is helps them to be better managers of their nutrient programs, and in many cases, it returns more profit to them because of their better nutrient management . . . All the growers that I work with that are using this are telling me what they're saving, and they also feel it's a lot better for the environment and the land." Royal says. It's a testament to the hard work and dedication that Florida growers have for the land they farm. **ag**

It's a testament to the hard work and dedication that Florida growers have for the land they farm.

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January is the time to begin "catch up" on your garden and landscaping care. The aftermath of Hurricane Irma left all plants with virtually nothing in their rootstock, so now is the perfect time to begin feeding them all they need. It is also time to plant azaleas! What a perfect way to brighten up your flower beds from this winter "gloom." Find out what else Mr. Doty recommends by scanning this QR code with your smartphone or tablet.



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WEB EXCLUSIVE FEATURE

The annual Polk County Youth Fair is around the corner. Find out just what exhibitors are looking most forward to in this months web exclusive feature.



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SOIL HEALTH AND YOUR GROVE

WE NEED a paradigm shift in agriculture. I know that's a bold statement, but let me tell you a quick story about why I feel this way.

Over the holidays, I had the pleasure of touring citrus groves in Avon Park. What I witnessed was a beautiful landscape and a proud agricultural community. I walked acres and acres of citrus throughout the day, crawling on hands and knees, digging and smelling soil throughout the night. I was amazed at the unique combinations of soil I witnessed, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

A quick check of a soil survey on the USDA NRCS website (nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/soils/survey/) confirmed over 19 soil series on only 500 acres of grove! A quick aerial scan showed that the health of the grove really depended on the health of the soil.

The nature and properties of your soil determines your success, as your soil is responsible for regulating water, sustaining plant and animal life, filtering and buffering potential pollutants, cycling nutrients, limiting leaching and run off, and providing habitat for billions of bacteria and fungi, which are the foundation of our ecosystem. With all this diversity, we have to question our one size-fits-all approach to farming, to which we have all become accustomed. It is a system that does not consider the side effects of pesticides and high salt fertilizers on our delicate ecosystem; a system of fear that not enough is worse than too much.

Soil health is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Since 2005, we have dramatically increased inputs searching for the silver bullet to citrus greening disease. During this same period, we have watched citrus production drop from 260 million boxes to the latest USDA estimation of 38 million boxes.

It is time to say goodbye to the old destructive system of the last 65 years and look to the future using the power of nature to heal our soils, plants and profits. Contact Guardian Soil Solutions to arrange a free consultation for a prescription-based solution tailored to your unique soil type.



by JOSHUA YOUNG

This column is sponsored by Guardian Soil Solutions.

BIO: Josh Young is a proud former U.S. Marine and native of Plant City, Florida. His passion for helping growers led him to co-found Guardian Soil Solutions, a full-service agribusiness that focuses on soil health. Josh's love of agriculture stems from his earliest days on his granddaddy's farm. For more information about Josh and Guardian Soil Solutions, visit guardiansoilsolutions.com.



ZOOMING IN ON AGRICULTURE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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Bok Tower Gardens' Lunch and Learn

On Wednesday, January 10 at Bok Tower Gardens was a "lunch and learn" course offered by Polk County Master Gardeners. It was a nice afternoon to spend learning about landscaping care for homeowners.

photos by CHELSEA WALDMAN



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JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2018

JANUARY 17

HAINES CITY FARMER'S MARKET

Held every Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., this market is open year-round and features an abundance of fresh produce and local retailers/resellers. Located in Haines City, Railroad Park 15 North Fifth St (at Fifth Street and Jones Ave). The market is seeking more vendors and farmers. For more information, contact Tommy Cassell at (863) 421-3700.



JANUARY 17-19

TPIE INTERNATIONAL EXPO

The Tropical Plant International Expo (TPIE) is the defining event for showcasing what's hot in the world of Florida tropical foliage and florals. Nearly 400 vendors spread over close to five acres create a gorgeous indoor garden of breathtaking displays. Come see the latest trends in ornamental and tropical plants! Tickets are \$30. Visit tpie.org for more information.



JANUARY 19

FARM TO TABLE DINNER: SOUP'S ON!

World Food Championship's Amy Freeze prepares a delicious winter-themed meal, complete with soups, stews, dessert, and drinks. This delectable taste treat takes place at Bok Tower Gardens from 6 – 8 p.m. Tickets are \$45. Bok Tower Gardens is located at 1151 Tower Blvd in Lake Wales. For more information, please visit boktowergardens.org.

JANUARY 20

CENTRAL FLORIDA FARM TOUR

This self-guided driving tour is a hit among locals and tourists who are interested in the agricultural scene of Central Florida. This is a chance to visit a variety of working farms and experience operations not normally open to the public. You are free to visit every farm on the tour or choose just the ones that suit your interest. It is an excellent opportunity for families to learn more about the region's rich agricultural history. The tour runs from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. and costs \$20 per carload. For more information, visit centralfloridafarmtour.com.



JANUARY 20-26

POLK COUNTY YOUTH FAIR

The Polk County Youth Fair is a cherished annual event for the young people of Polk County. It's the next generation of farmers, craftspeople, and artisans' opportunity to showcase their work for prizes and recognition. Come out and see the livestock, horticulture, and other family and consumer science projects. You'll be impressed at what these kids have been up to. The fair is held at Polk County Agriculture Complex, 1702 US-17S in Bartow.

For more information, contact (863) 519-1046.

Gardening Tips for January

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PRUNE grape vines; prune or transplant trees & shrubs.

CHECK peach trees for white scale & treat.

DEADHEAD annuals to extend flowering period.

BEWARE of termite swarms on warm & humid January days. Call an exterminator if any spotted.

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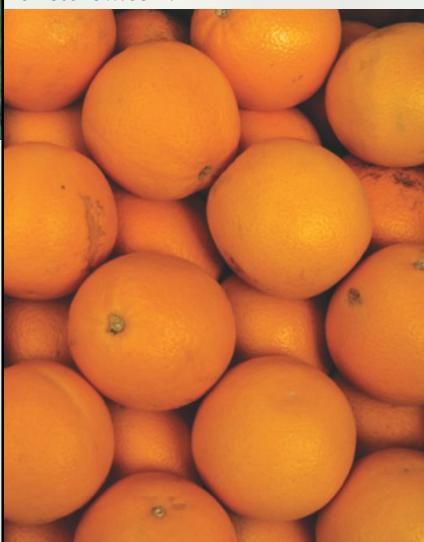
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JANUARY 24-25

FLORIDA CITRUS SHOW

The annual Florida Citrus Show will be taking place in Ft. Pierce on January 24 and 25, starting at 8:30 a.m. each day. There will be presentations covering such topics as HLB management, water farming, postbloom fruit drop (PFD), and more. It's a great way to meet with other citrus growers and pick up some pointers on what's new in citrus innovations. The show will be held at Havert L. Fenn Center in Ft. Pierce. Get more information online at citrusshow.com.



JANUARY 27

LAKELAND DOWNTOWN FARMERS' CURB MARKET

This market is held every Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., in the street at the intersection of E. Pine Street and N. Kentucky Avenue. Enjoy produce from farmers plus resale produce, artisans and street food, music and more. For more information, contact Becky Abel, LDDA Coordinator at (863) 687-8910 or visit downtownfarmerscurbmarket.org.



JANUARY 31

MAIN STREET BARTOW FARMERS' MARKET

Held every Wednesday at Fort Blount Park, located on W Davidson St in Bartow, you'll find a wide variety of vendors offering fresh local produce, an array of jams, jellies, pickles, honey, sweet treats, and more. There are also food vendors on site. Enjoy the leisurely pace of a visit to this friendly market. It takes place from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.



FEBRUARY 1

DAVENPORT FARMERS' MARKET

Every Thursday from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., you can find a wealth of information about fun things to do in Central Florida, cool souvenirs, plus local produce, handmade crafts, and lots more. Stay up-to-date with what's going on and pick up specially discounted attraction tickets (when available) at this weekly market.

FEBRUARY 8-19

FLORIDA STATE FAIR

Get ready for a whirlwind of excitement at the Florida State Fair! There is something for every member of the family to enjoy at this extravaganza of sights and sounds. You'll find plenty of rides, agricultural exhibits, an array of vendors, live music, and more. The Florida State Fairgrounds are located at 4800 U.S. Hwy 301 N in Tampa. For directions and ticket information, visit floridastatefair.com.



FEBRUARY 10

ASK A MASTER GARDENER AT THE LAKE WALES FARMERS' CURB MARKET

This is your chance to connect directly with a Polk County Master Gardener to have all of your gardening concerns and questions addressed. While you're there, pick up some fresh produce and locally created products, such as free-range eggs and goat's milk baked goods. The market takes place the second and fourth Saturday of each month, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m. in downtown Lake Wales.



FEBRUARY 13

LUNCH AND LEARN: WHAT IS FLORIDA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPING™?

Learn how to incorporate the nine principles of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ in your yard to create a healthy and attractive space. The program covers landscape design, installation, and maintenance. A free lunch is provided. Registration is required at [eventbrite.com/e/lunch-and-learn-what-is-florida-friendly-landscapingtm-tickets-40067589238](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lunch-and-learn-what-is-florida-friendly-landscapingtm-tickets-40067589238)



FEBRUARY 17

PCCA TRADE SHOW AND RANCH RODEO

Join the Polk County Cattlemen's Association, in collaboration with the UF/IFAS Polk Extension Service, in hosting this year's Trade Show and Ranch Rodeo. Come out to 1702 U.S. Highway 17 S in Bartow, starting at 9 a.m. For more information about this event, or for tickets, contact Bridget Carlisle at (863) 519-1048.



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LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT IQF

MUCH OF THE USA began 2018 on an extremely cold and icy footing, quickly bringing to mind Disney's "Frozen," the highly popular animated film. At Adams Cold Storage (ACS), we're blessed with the opportunity to make a living in the real world of frozen and to do our part to secure critical links in the cold food supply chain..

Among the thousands of food products and ingredients that come through our facility each year are those of the IQF kind. Anyone who's ever done any grocery shopping likely has purchased one or more IQF products without even realizing it.

IQF is short for "individually quick frozen." Think freshly frozen and packaged vegetables, fruits, seafood, and meats, and you'll have the idea right away what IQF is all about. In IQF packaging, whether it's in plastic or cardboard, each food piece inside is first frozen separately—or individually—from all the others. IQF is achieved using mechanical or cryogenic blast, plate, belt-tunnel, fluidized bed, or cryogenic freezing equipment which, depending on the product, invokes process aerodynamics and temperatures ranging from -40° to -320° F.

IQF technology dates back to the 1920s and, interestingly, to a fellow who began his career as a taxidermist and biologist, Clarence Birdseye of the Birds Eye Frozen Food Company. Perfected through many years of trial and error, the IQF process—or "flash freezing"—freezes the pieces so the ice crystals are as small as possible to minimize damage to the food fibers and cells.

In food shipping and warehousing, it's crucial to keep IQF products below 0 degrees. If they get above 10 degrees, the ice crystals begin to soften. If the crystals are refrozen, the food fibers break down and "glazing" can develop. Few people enjoy the mushiness from a bag of refrozen shrimp!

Going back into ACS history, the first IQF product we received in 2011 was frozen corn for the National School Lunch Program. Today, we store many IQF products, including cherries, citrus pearls (frozen nuggets of oranges, grapefruit, etc.), strawberries, mushrooms, potato wedges, french fries, chopped spinach, fish filets, shrimp, clams, corn, and peas.



by BEN ADAMS, JR.

This column is sponsored by Adams Cold Storage, LLC

BIO: Ben Adams, Jr., is an owner and president of president of Adams Cold Storage, LLC, in Auburndale. He has been directly involved in citrus production, warehousing and distribution, as well as state and community support, since 1980. His facility incorporates some 250,000 square feet of multitemperature warehousing, and is AA rated by BRC-International.

FEATURE | agriedu

TEACHING TEACHERS at PLANT CAMP

UF/IFAS Plant Camp Offers Florida Educators a Close Look at Florida Flora and Fauna

by GRACE BOGESS

THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) has opened applications for its popular *and free* 2018 Plant Camp and will be accepted until February 18. The five-day workshop takes place from June 11 to 15, 2018. Plant Camp is designed for any Florida educator interested in learning more about the 130-plus invasive plant species invading Florida, and the native flora and fauna that make the state unique.

Plant Camp is the first event of its kind to provide such intensive in-service training for Florida teachers about aquatic and upland invasive plants. Attendees compete for the limited number of spaces available for this popular professional development opportunity, and are selected by a committee of UF/IFAS Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants (CAIP) staff based on evidence of interest and a commitment to sharing what they learn with students and colleagues.

Working with dozens of teachers throughout the state, more than 70 lessons, activities and audio-visual presentations have been produced for upper elementary, middle and high school students. Materials correlate to Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and Common Core State Standards, and support learning skill-based science in a real-world context.

Dehlia Albrecht, Education Coordinator for the Florida Invasive Plant Education Initiative at the UF/IFAS CAIP, tells us, "The main points we are trying to convey are why invasive plants are a problem, both from an environmental and an economic perspective, and why it's so important to manage them. How we manage them, and what teachers and students can do as citizens are also covered. Prevention is key – for

example, you should not dump your aquarium into a storm drain or waterway. But students can also play an active role in removing invasive plants; for example, by participating in or organizing an invasive plant removal project in their neighborhood."

Albrecht says, "Teachers also get to see native plants in the field and learn first-hand why invasive plants are a problem. Invasive plants can reduce biodiversity, and can have negative impacts on our native plants, as well as animals that are reliant on native plants and habitats. We will talk about all these ecological relationships, and native plants are an important aspect."

"Plant Camp is a week full of hands-on activities with presenters from UF, state park biologists, experts from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Invasive Plant Management Section, and plant managers from the private sector," explains Albrecht. These presenters will provide a rare behind-the-scenes look at natural resource management issues in the state of Florida, and give teachers the inspiration and confidence to share their new knowledge with students and colleagues upon returning to the classroom. **ag**

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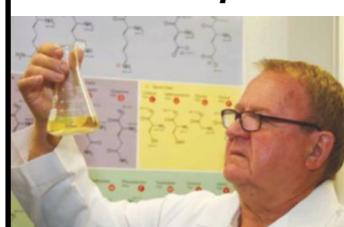
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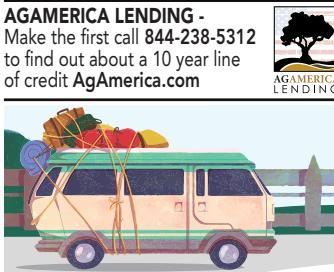
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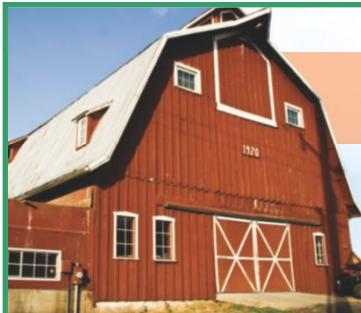
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PREPARE YOUR LAWN AND GARDEN FOR A GREAT YEAR

NOW THAT the New Year has arrived, it's time to make some plant and garden resolutions that will add life to your outdoor space. Here are the gardening tips for the month of January to get your lawn and garden started off the right way.

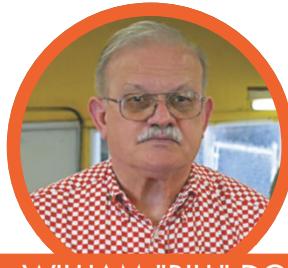
One of the first things to do is fertilize Bermuda grass and lawns over seeded with rye grass. It's also important to feed lilies and other bulbous plants.

Now is the time to check your peach trees for white peach scale. Spray peach trees every 10 days from "pink bud stage" until one week before harvest with combination fungicide and insecticide, such as Fertilome's Fruit Spray. Taking this measure will prevent blossom blight, brown rot, and worms in fruit.

While most of your plants are now dormant, pruning and trimming is a must. Annuals bloom more and longer if old blossoms are picked off and bouquets are cut promptly from home. Now is the ideal time to prune or transplant your trees and shrubs.

An important reminder is to watch out for termites. They can swarm on warm, humid days during January. Call an exterminator if any are seen.

While kicking off the New Year, make sure you continue to feed vegetables and annual flowers lightly every two weeks.



by WILLIAM "BILL" DOTY

This column is sponsored by Doty Farm and Garden Supply, Inc.

BIO: William R. "Bill" Doty is owner of Doty Farm and Garden Supply Inc., founded in Winter Haven in 1954. Bill graduated from Winter Haven High School and Florida State University. Growing up, he learned valuable lessons in listening and asking questions and was a student of the family business. Bill shares his knowledge with his customers daily and with our readers monthly.



Recipe Spotlight

Not Just For Looks— Adding Some Pretty Petals to your Plate

by TRENT ROWE, *Food Editor*

LOVELY to look at, and often a treat for the nose, blooms can be tasty, too.

Florida was named by explorer Ponce de Leon in 1513. The name "Florida" comes from the Spanish word "florido," which means "full of flowers" or "flowery" and that sort of sums up Central Florida.

We have something in bloom all the time and it's a shame to let the flowers go to seed, unless you need seed, then that's a good thing.

Remember Euell Gibbons? He was the gentleman in the 1970s who found something to eat almost everywhere he looked. He wrote "Stalking the Wild Asparagus", "Stalking Healthful Herbs", "Stalking the Blue-Eyed Scallop", "Beachcombers Handbook", and "Euell Gibbons' Handbook of Edible Wild Plants."

The joke was that his next book would be "Stalking and Eating the Wild Volkswagen." He would have been ecstatic at our variety.

Central Florida garden ingredients include:



marigold, nasturtium, pansy, violet, begonia, calendula, chrysanthemum, citrus, dianthus, daylily, dandelion, geranium, hibiscus, hollyhock, jasmine, mustard, okra, pineapple guava, rose, sage, and yucca.

Squash blossoms and the blooms of herbs like chives and dill are also commonly eaten.

Many blooms are sprinkled on other foods just for looks, but when it's zucchini season (isn't it always zucchini season?) you have a container that's cute – and tasty.

If you want a crop of zucchini as well as containers you should pick the male flowers. Female flowers most often have tiny squash attached. Let them grow.

Here's an appetizer recipe that's easy to make and easy on the waist because the cheese-stuffed blossoms are baked, not fried.

STUFFED SQUASH BLOSSOM BRUSCHETTA, adapted from *Recipe of Health*

16 slices diagonally cut baguette, toasted until crisp
2 garlic cloves, halved
1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese
½ cup grated fresh parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
1 ½ tablespoon finely minced onion or shallot
Pinch each salt, pepper and cinnamon
16 large squash blossoms, pistil and stamens removed



continued on page 38

Sometimes, our greatest moments come from within.



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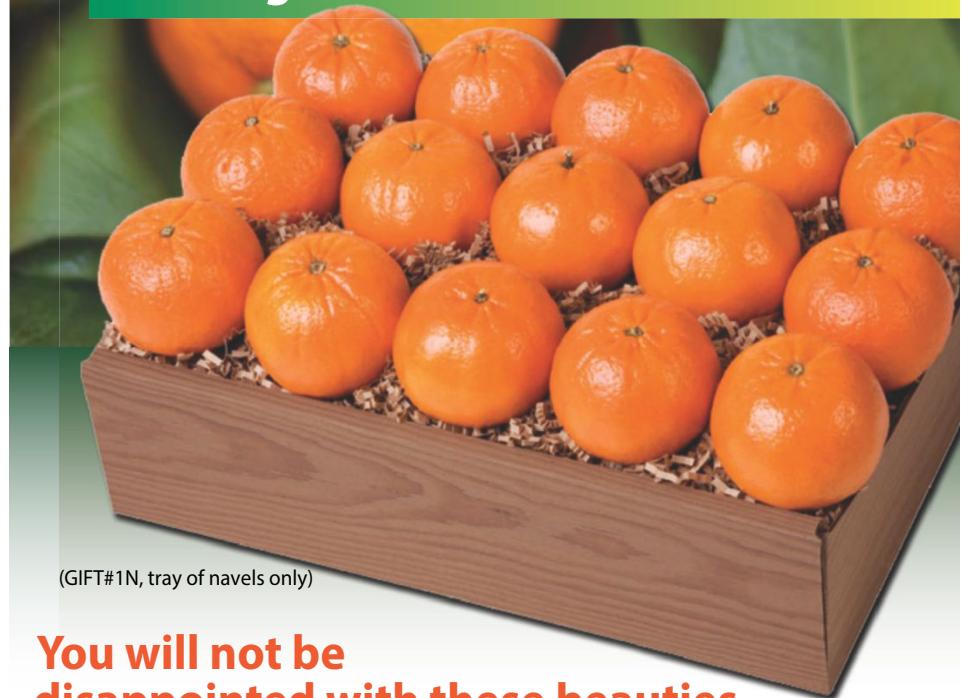
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RECIPE SPOTLIGHT | continued from page 36

Rub cut sides of garlic over one side of each bread slice. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 350°.

Drain ricotta by putting the cheese into a coffee filter in a strainer. Let drain 45 minutes. Scrape ricotta into a bowl. Stir in Parmesan and rest of ingredients (except blossoms).

Gently spoon about 1 tablespoon ricotta mixture into each blossom. Press edges of blossoms to seal in cheese.

Place stuffed blossoms in a 13 x 9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray.

Bake at 350° for 15 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Top each bread slice with 1 squash blossom; serve immediately.

Each blossom has 216 calories and a little more than 9 grams of protein – 18 percent of your daily needs.



Once you taste the smell of roses you will be hooked. You can buy it as rose water or essence of roses or just add rose petals from your garden. The flavor is subtle and the smell is more potent. Be sure to use roses that have not been sprayed with chemicals.



ROSE PETAL JAM

8 ounces fresh rose petals

Juice of 2 lemons

2 cups white sugar, divided

3 cups water

1 (1.75 ounce) package powdered fruit pectin

Toss the rose petals, lemon juice, and 1 cup sugar together in a bowl until the petals are evenly coated. Let stand at room temperature overnight.

Bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat. Stir in the rose petal mixture and reserved 1 cup of sugar; stir until the sugar has dissolved. Reduce the heat to medium-low, and simmer 20 minutes. Increase the heat to medium-high, and return the mixture to a boil for 5 minutes. Stir in the pectin, and boil for 1 minute.

Pour the jam into 4 sterilized half-pint jars. Seal with rings and lids, and store in a cool dark place.



A favorite white cupcake recipe takes on a rose hue with a few drops of food color and a few petals in the mix. Top the iced cupcakes with more rose petals.

Add roses to coconut cupcakes, too. And yogurt. And icing. And pudding. And milk. And smoothies. But remember . . . *roses that have little smell have little taste.*

Some flowers have punch as well as perfume.

Nasturtiums wake up your mouth when used to top mild greens.

Big hibiscus blooms are a treat for the eyes when on the plant and are almost as pretty when cut up on a salad. They have subtle flavor of cranberry and citrus. Use just the petals because the reproductive parts can be bitter.

Rosemary blooms in the cooler months and the blue flowers add look and taste to salads. Garnish chicken or pork dishes with whole stalks of blooms.

When picking flowers for the table, it's best to do it before the temperature rises, just after the dew has evaporated or late afternoon. **ag**





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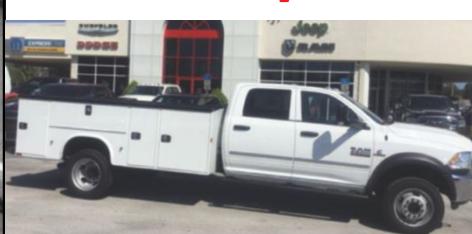
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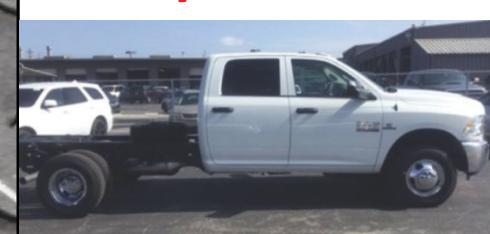
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